

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

9: CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

1. PLACE OF THE WILL IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17. [wills to do His will]

"Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair.

"What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

"Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians.

"Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith." Steps to Christ, pages 51, 52.

"Christ has said, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 7:17, R.V. Instead of questioning and caviling concerning that which you do not understand, give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light. By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt.

"There is an evidence that is open to all, the most highly educated and the most illiterate, the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises." Steps to Christ, pages 116, 117.

2. ABIDING IN CHRIST

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the

vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:1-8.

"Christ, in teaching His disciples, said: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He purges [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit." He who is united to Christ, partaking of the sap and nourishment of the vine, will work the works of Christ. The love of Christ must be in him, or he cannot be in the vine. Supreme love to God, and love to your neighbor equal to that which you bear to yourself, is the basis of true religion. . . .

"God prunes us with sorrow, with disappointment and affliction, that the outgrowth of strong, perverse traits of character may be weakened, and that the better traits may have a chance to develop. Idols must be given up, the conscience must become more tender, the meditations of the heart must be spiritual, and the entire character must become symmetrical. Those who really desire to glorify God, will be thankful for the exposure of every idol and every sin, that they may see these evils and put them away; but the divided heart will plead for indulgence rather than denial.

"The apparently dry branch, by being connected with the living vine, becomes a part of it. Fiber by fiber, and vein by vein, it adheres to the vine, till it derives its life and nourishment from the parent stock. The graft buds, blossoms, and produces fruit. The soul, dead in trespasses and sins, must experience a similar process in order to be reconciled to God, and to become a partaker of Christ's life and joy. As the graft receives life when united to the vine, so the sinner partakes of the divine nature when connected with Christ. Finite man is united with the infinite God. When thus united, the words of Christ abide in us, and we are not actuated by a spasmodic feeling, but by a living, abiding principle. The words of Christ must be meditated upon, and cherished and enshrined in the heart." Testimonies, Vol. 4 pages 353-355.

3. SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15.

"I beg of you for Christ's sake, let no hasty, rash expressions fall from your lips, let no extravagant language be used, let nothing be uttered that will savor of railing, for all this is human. Christ has no part in it. Let the ready writers be careful how they use their pens, lest they may seem to cast ridicule upon the positions of believers or unbelievers. We shall find our only safety in preserving the lowly spirit of Christ, in making straight paths for our feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way. The meekness and lowliness of Christ must take possession of the soul." Testimonies to Ministers, page 219.

"Christ Himself did not suppress one word of truth, but He spoke it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, that refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They rejected Him, the Savior' but He regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke His heart. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While he always bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with tender regard to every member of the human family of God. In all men he saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

“The servants of Christ are not to act out the dictates of the natural heart. They need to have close communion with God, lest, under provocation, self rise up, and they pour forth a torrent of words that are unbecoming, that are not as dew, or the still showers that refresh the withering plants. This is what Satan wants them to do; for these are his methods. It is the dragon that is wroth; it is the spirit of Satan that is revealed in anger and accusing. But God's servants are to be representatives of Him. He desires them to deal only in the currency of heaven, the truth that bears His own image and superscription. The power by which they are to overcome evil is the power of Christ. The glory of Christ is their strength. They are to fix their eyes upon His loveliness. Then they can present the gospel with divine tact and gentleness. And the spirit that is kept gentle under provocation will speak more effectively in favor of the truth than will any argument, however forcible.” *The Desire of Ages*, pages 352, 353.

4. PROVE ALL THINGS

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” *I Thessalonians 5:14-21*.

“In this epistle the apostle introduces the subject of the Second Coming of the Lord. He then describes the state of the unbelieving world at that time, who are saying, “Peace and safety,” when the day of the Lord is about to burst upon them, and sudden destruction come upon them as a thief in the night. He then exhorts the church, in view of these things, to keep awake, to watch and be sober. Among the exhortations that follow are the words we have quoted, “Quench not the Spirit,” etc. Some may think that these three verses are completely detached from one another in sense; but they have a natural connection, in the order in which they stand. The person who quenches the Spirit will be left to despise prophesyings, which are the legitimate fruit of the Spirit. “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” *Joel 2:28*. The expression, “Prove all things,” is limited to the subject of discourse, prophesyings, and we are to try the spirits by the tests which God has given us in His word. Spiritual deceptions and false prophesyings abound at the present time; and doubtless this text has a special application here. But mark, the apostle does not say, reject all things; but, Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” *Early Writings*, pages 141, 142.

“Paul says: . . . “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” *I Thessalonians 5:16-18*.

“Such are the fruits of Bible conversion and sanctification; and it is because the great principles of righteousness set forth in the law of God are so indifferently regarded by the Christian world, that these fruits are so rarely witnessed. This is why there is manifest so little of that deep, abiding work of the Spirit of God which marked revivals in former years.

“It is by beholding that we become changed. And as those sacred precepts in which God has opened to men the perfection and holiness of His character are neglected, and the minds of the people are attracted to human teachings and theories, what marvel that there has followed a decline of living piety in the church. Says the Lord, “They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” *Jeremiah 2:13*....

It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people. “Thus says the Lord, Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.” *Jeremiah 6:16*. *The Great Controversy*, pages 477, 478.

5. THE PRODIGAL LEAVES HOME

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.” Luke 15:11-16.

“In the parable of the prodigal son is presented the Lord's dealing with those who have once known the Father's love, but who have allowed the tempter to lead them captive at his will....

“This younger son had become weary of the restraint of his father's house. He thought that his liberty was restricted. His father's love and care for him were misinterpreted, and he determined to follow the dictates of his own inclination.

“The youth acknowledges no obligation to his father, and expresses no gratitude; yet he claims the privilege of a child in sharing his father's goods. The inheritance that would fall to him at his father's death he desires to receive now. He is bent on present enjoyment, and cares not for the future....

“What a picture here of the sinner's state! Although surrounded with the blessings of His love, there is nothing that the sinner, bent on self-indulgence and sinful pleasure, desires so much as separation from God. Like the ungrateful son, he claims the good things of God as his by right. He takes them as a matter of course, and makes no return of gratitude, renders no service of love. As Cain went out from the presence of the Lord to seek his home; as the prodigal wandered into the “far country,” so do sinners seek happiness in forgetfulness of God. Romans 1:28.” Christ's Object Lessons, pages 198-200.

“General Grant was to be entertained at a banquet in the city of Houston, Texas. All that money could do to make the affair a success was done. Wines of the rarest vintage were ordered. The most notable men in the Lone Star State were present. After all were seated, the headwaiter approached the place where Grant was seated and was about to pour out the first glass of wine for the guest of the occasion. Quietly and calmly Grant reached forward and turned his glass down. With the true spirit of Southern chivalry, every Texan present, in the same quiet manner, reached forward and turned his glass down, and for once in, the history of banqueting in the Southwest, a famous dinner was served without a drop of alcoholic liquor being drunk.” H. L. SMITH.

6. THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it. And let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he

answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment. And yet thou never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou has killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is your. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. Luke 15:17-32.

Weary? Lay down thy load; Come unto Me, and rest. Let thy burdens all upon Me fall, Recline upon My breast. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

Guilty? Aye; so thou art; But I assume thy guilt, For thee I died, the Crucified, For thee My lifeblood spilt. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Hungry? Dear child, here's food; Receive the living bread. This manna is given direct from heaven. That thou may now be fed. John 6:48.

Thirsty? Here is the drink Which smitten Rock does bring. Not Marah's draught thou erstwhile quaffed, But Elim's cooling spring. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." John 7:38.

My Master and my King, Prone at Thy feet I fall! All things supplied by Thee who died, On Thee alone I call. "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68.

Contented? Ah, yes, satisfied; For now Thou art wholly mine. Like Thee I'd be, Thy face I'd see, And I'd be wholly Yours. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." Psalm 23:6. T. H. JEYS

7. THE TALENTS

"The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability. And straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

"After a long time the Lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou has not sent. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou has that is your. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not

sent. Thou ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he has. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25:14-30.

"Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time.

"The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity. We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin. It is now that we are to form characters for the future, immortal life. It is now that we are to prepare for the searching judgment." Christ's Object Lessons, page 342.

TIME MANAGEMENT

One day, an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business people. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered, over-achievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." And he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. He also produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class yelled, "Yes." The time management expert replied, "Really?" He then reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. He then asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"

By this time the class was catching on. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" He replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is the jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good."

Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One fellow raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it!"

"No, No;" the speaker replied, "That's not the point at all. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

What are the "big rocks" in our lives? What are the things that must come first to live the true Christian life? First and foremost must come time spent in prayer and our personal Bible study to feed our own souls. Then time to bring our families together in morning and evening worship to strengthen them, praying a wall of protection around each one. Quality time to nurture our family ties, to nourish and strengthen the bonds of Christian love must be allotted. Another "big rock" in our lives must be the needful time to care for our physical health, with good food, exercise and proper cleanliness of person and environment. These need to be "big rocks" for all of us; we need to put them first into our plans and schedules, or we'll never get them in at all. So, ask yourself this question: Where am I putting the vital "big rocks" in my life? Make sure to put those first in your planning jar every day!